

UA protects student privacy with opt-out system

By Saichi Oba
Guest Opinion

University of Alaska officials take student privacy seriously. Both state and federal laws protect student privacy. One of the most important is the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (known as FERPA) of 1974. The act applies to all schools that receive funds through any program of the U.S. Department of Education.

FERPA has several important provisions. The first is that you (or your parent, if you're under 18) have the right to inspect and review your educational records and to request a correction to any errors.

The second is that the school may not disclose, without consent, information other than "directory information" to anyone outside the institution. There are some limited exceptions, such as complying with a judicial order or appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies.

Each educational institution defines "directory information," but it generally includes such things as your name, date and type of degrees earned, dates of attendance, vital statistics on student athletes, etc. Although the law allows institutions to include a physical address and phone number as part of directory information, UA protects all



Photo courtesy of UA Statewide

students' privacy by only including email addresses. For more details on the university's directory information, go to http://www.alaska.edu/studentservices/ferpa/what_is_directory_info.pdf.

The third provision of FERPA allows the student to request to withhold directory information. If you have made such a request, the school cannot release your information to anyone, other than school officials with a legitimate educational interest, without your written permission.

This third provision has recently been a topic of much debate. People value their privacy more than ever, and many universities,

including UA, are looking for ways to help protect student information.

Students who request that UA withhold their directory information, also known as a "confidentiality hold," must realize the following:

- Your name will not be printed in the published university chancellor's and dean's lists or commencement program;
- Employers, insurance companies, etc. cannot obtain verification of your attendance and/or degrees earned without your expressed written permission;
- And you will only be able to discuss your UA records or accounts (including computer accounts) in person after presenting a valid government-issued or UA photo identification.

We've had students who've requested holds, then call the Registrar's office or business office, for instance, and not been able to receive help. If you have requested a confidentiality hold, you may only receive help in person, with ID in hand, or in writing. This includes all information related to your student records, financial aid and billing, as well as obtaining help via the phone by one of our Help Desks. If you need a password reset or any special assistance with your email, Blackboard, UAOnline or other accounts, students who have requested

confidential holds must take care of that business in person. Potential employers will not be able to verify educational records indicated on job applications and résumés. Family and friends will not be able to contact you using standard directory services. Your name will not even be included in commencement programs, dean's list, or other honor rolls unless you make specific written consent for such publication.

If you call one of our Help Desks and are told that you cannot be served by phone, then it may be that you have a confidentiality hold. The good news is that you can go into UAOnline and remove the hold, then go back and add it again later. UAOnline has been modified to display a red text box upon login if you have the confidentiality field set to "yes."

We have developed an online tutorial for faculty, students and staff who need to know FERPA for their jobs, or for those who are just curious to learn more. For instructions on how to get to the tutorial, to update your status in UAOnline, or for any information on UA's FERPA policies, go to www.alaska.edu/studentservices/ferpa/.

Saichi Oba is assistant vice president for student and enrollment services at the UA System Office.

Student jobs open even in a recession

By Will Smith
Sun Star Reporter

Lately I've been feeling like I'm sort of drifting through life with no real direction or long-term goals. While this wasn't a big problem for me personally, my friends and family felt it was. Since I'm not really big on listening to other people tell me how I'm inadequate, I decided to get proactive about the situation. My first stop was UAF's student job fair.

I walked into the Wood Center on Wednesday April 1 with a sense of purpose. I was there to seriously consider my job opportunities and set some career goals for myself. First I decided to hit up the free popcorn booth, as it's impossible to make career choices on an empty stomach. Then I went full force to the front desk where I was provided with several pieces of reading material on how to find and obtain the right job for me. After that I decided to hit up every single job opportunity set up at that



Photo by Nina Schwinghammer/Sun Star

The Career Center hosted a student job fair on Wednesday afternoon in the Woodcenter. Firefighter Tim Bramble explains life on the job to UAF student Benedict Houglund.

fair, whether I was qualified for the position or not (mostly not). First there was the Institute of Arctic Biology (I wasn't even sure what Arctic Biology is, so that was no good), then there

was Residence Life (too self-motivated for me), the University Fire Department (too physical), Disability Services (too noble), Financial Aid (too financial), and Academic Advising (too academic). I started to sense a pattern.

Ultimately what I gained from attending the student job fair was the knowledge that there are a lot of job opportunities out there, and they need able-minded and -bodied students to fill those jobs. Therefore I feel it's my duty to inspire all of you to get out there and apply, because if I'm not going to, somebody should, and in this economy it's always helpful to have a steady job. For the next time you attend a student job fair, I also offer these two tips that guarantee you'll make a good impression: just because it's April Fools' Day, don't assume the job fair is a giant prank, and bring a variety of disguises so that you won't get odd looks when you go up for your fifth bag of free popcorn.